

ABOUT GROWTH

A Quarterly Publication About Growth Management

Winter-Spring 1996-97



**WASHINGTON STATE
COMMUNITY, TRADE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Building Foundations for the Future



Using the Growth Management Act to preserve our natural heritage

By Jennifer M. Belcher
Commissioner of Public Lands

Just a few years ago, it was commonplace to drive through most of Washington and see beautiful farms and large blocks of forest lands. Already, in the counties that make up the I-5 corridor, that's becoming more difficult. Instead, we see malls, park-and-ride lots, and new housing developments popping up everywhere.

Conversion of Washington's resource lands to development is a choice being made by individuals and local governments each day. In recent years, we've lost about 300 acres of private forest land a day. Those who are fortunate enough to own resource lands are increasingly offered hard-to-resist options to sell or develop their lands. Local governments, always needing stronger revenue sources, often approve much of the development.

When our Growth Management Act was passed in 1990, it was controversial. Some thought it was unnecessary, and others thought it was unconstitutional to require new processes to manage the unparalleled growth. But the Legislature was clear—we couldn't continue to enjoy the quality of life that we've grown used to in Washington without making tough decisions about how much growth we could accommodate, where it should be located, and how it would be supported.

The GMA required that local governments planning under the act identify their forest and agricultural lands and adopt ordinances to assure their continuation. It also required that these governments designate areas of critical importance to other vital resources, such as water, fish and wildlife.



Jennifer M. Belcher

Just seven years later, 27 of 29 GMA planning counties have addressed forest and agricultural land conversion issues to match their local conditions by identifying

these lands. These counties are providing at least basic protections. And most have completed their critical areas ordinances to protect other public resources. That's real progress.

However, we have more to do if we're to enjoy this wonderful experience that is Washington well into the future.

The GMA anticipated that we would recognize that resources often cross jurisdictional boundaries and that some resources have state-wide significance, and therefore, are important to all of us—not just one county. Our rivers are a good example. We need to continue to identify resources of state-wide significance.

The tough choices made by most counties thus far under GMA lay a foundation for further decisions. But, if we continue to grow at our current rate, we'll double our population in just 50 short years. Our children and grandchildren will see a very different Washington than we've known. The areas most vulnerable to that growth—simply because of their popularity and our desire for "peace and quiet"—are our shorelines, rural areas, and forest and agricultural lands. If we want to see those preserved for our grandchildren, we need to continue to insist on tough decisions being made in favor of the future, and not just the present.

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CTED publication draws wide interest

By Steve Wells
Assistant Director, Growth Management Services

"They're 'selling' like hot cakes!"

When I told my staff about the initial response to our new publication, *Growth Management: It's Beginning to Take Shape*, they were delighted but not surprised. After all, they know from their daily work how well the communities of the state are doing in implementing GMA.

Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Washington, the publication is being well received.

Readers liked the examples from community leaders throughout the state on how growth policies are being put into practice. They thought the growth management background information and statistics were useful. And readers said the photos helped to tell the story that in many places and in many ways, we are starting to see the effects of growth management state-wide.

Dick Anderwald, director of Planning/Special Projects for Yakima County, said in a letter to me, "Kudos to you, your staff, Lucy Steers, and the rest of the League of Women Voters crew for an outstanding job on this report! In my view, it is the best single piece of work produced since the advent of GMA, in terms of general citizen appeal and readability."

We have seen the need for some time to prepare a report on what's happening with growth management in the state. With a small staff that is very busy providing information and assistance to local communities as well as reviewing comprehensive plans and development regulations, our ability to generate growth management reports has been limited.

But we thought we could pull together a publication that gave information about key growth management issues. We wanted people to know about Washington's strong economy, work being done to revitalize downtowns,

developments in affordable housing, plans for enhancing single-family neighborhoods, and the variety of approaches counties have taken in developing policies for rural and agricultural lands, to name a few.

We see reports such as *Growth Management: It's Beginning to Take Shape*, as one way CTED can provide reliable information on growth management. We hope that sections of the report will be updated and expanded in future publications.

This newsletter gives additional information on three local governments featured in the report — Wenatchee, Vancouver, and Douglas County. It also includes information on Port Townsend's comprehensive plans and GMA resource land planning and management in the state.

We'd like to hear from you about what's happening in your community to carry out growth management. We'd also appreciate your ideas on what other kinds of growth management information would be helpful to you. Please call Rita R. Robison at 360-586-9119, send a FAX to 360-753-2950, or e-mail your comments to ritar@cted.wa.gov.

If you'd like to receive a copy of the new report, please call 360-753-2222. You can also view and download the report from the Internet at: <http://www.wa.gov.cted/growth/>

Moving toward sustainable local housing solutions

By Kurt Creager

Vice Chair, Washington State Affordable
Housing Advisory Board, and
Executive Director, Vancouver Housing Authority

It's employment growth, not the Growth Management Act, that's causing housing prices to rise in the Vancouver, Washington, area. It's time to get beyond the GMA blame-game and move toward sustainable local housing solutions here and elsewhere across the state of Washington.

After six years of aggressive employment growth, the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area is the fifth fastest growing area in the United States; after Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, and Atlanta.

Clark County led the four-county Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area in 1996, capturing 32 percent of the region's housing permit activity and 34 percent of the region's population growth. Clark County's market share is large because of a relatively abundant supply of vacant land at lower prices than the rest of the region, according to the Portland real estate consulting firm, Hobson Johnson and Associates. Housing costs in Clark County are generally more affordable than the Oregon portion of the region.

While it's popular to blame the GMA for Clark County's dynamic increase in housing prices, there is no factual basis for this. A recent comparison by Washington State University's Real Estate Research Center found impact fees in Clark County and Vancouver among the lowest in the region.

People committed to providing affordable housing can use the following approaches to fashion sustainable local housing solutions.

Best practices

In the housing field, local governments who want to retain or develop a mix of affordable housing must set realistic yet aggressive goals and use benchmarking to measure and report their effectiveness. Otherwise, ineffective policies and programs are more likely to live well beyond their useful life.

Business retention and expansion strategy

Intel, in Washington County, Oregon, and Fujitsu in Gresham, Oregon, have sponsored their own employer assisted housing programs.

In Vancouver, the Vancouver Housing Authority has referral agreements with major employers such as Hewlett Packard, our largest employer. When the firm's Human Resources Department makes a referral to work force housing owned by the VHA, we reduce the first month's deposit to encourage Hewlett Packard employees to live near their place of work.

Increasingly, private business owners will look at housing as a key factor in expansion or relocation options. If local governments choose to do nothing about affordable housing, it will have negative economic consequences on the regional economy.

Land banking/asset management

Nonprofit holding companies or existing entities need to preserve development options on key sites until they become ripe and ready for offering through selective bidding or open competitive proposals. This is especially true in areas such as light rail stations and locations where added growth and development will occur in three to five years.

Bellevue and King County, Washington, have leveraged more

affordable housing by marketing good sites to private developers, both nonprofit and profit. The city of Vancouver has invested \$3 million to assemble key sites downtown, which are now offered for mixed-use development.

Land banking requires commitment to active asset management. Market trends must be continuously monitored to avoid buying at the market peak or selling prematurely.

Mixed income neighborhoods

Vibrant, viable, and diverse neighborhoods are defined by a mix of housing types, as well as a mix of household size and income. Creating new neighborhoods with the same rich mix of individuals takes more than zoning.

Instead, a package of land use incentives needs to be offered to private developers to provide a range of prices for sale and rent. Layered financing can also further the goal by providing long-term debt and equity for low cost, below market and long-term market rate loans. Creative use of nonprofit agency resources can help in project design, development and marketing — especially of below market and niche products for special populations.

Perhaps the best example of recreating and mixed income neighborhoods can be found in Vancouver, B.C. All three techniques outlined above and careful attention to site plan and architectural detail have produced a rich and vibrant mix of affordable housing types and styles, even in a market with extraordinarily high prices.

GMA: Big job, big rewards

By Julie McCulloch
Mayor of Port Townsend

"The new comprehensive plan has really increased our predictability. With the new codes, we builders now know what is required of us and that we can count on that throughout the permit process."

Paul Hess
Hess Construction

In April, the city of Port Townsend adopted the land use regulation that brought our community into full compliance with the Growth Management Act.

It was a giant effort getting to that point. It included three years of planning, thousands of hours donated by citizens, a complete rewrite of our zoning and subdivision regulations, and a successful trip to the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board to defend our work from an appeal.

Now that we have accomplished all of that, it's a good time to ask "was it all worth while?"

Without hesitation, the answer is yes. It was time and money very well spent.

The need for planning was there before GMA

The GMA caused our city to face up to a number of needs. It invigorated community involvement and is leading to great ad-

vances in the fit between our growth and the growth of our neighboring jurisdiction. Like many cities, Port Townsend's comprehensive plan and land use regulations were developed over a number of years. There was much in our planning that we had reason to be proud of, including protection of our natural areas and historic character.

At the same time, important issues were not being effectively dealt with before the GMA. Our development was not well coordinated with our ability to provide infrastructure. The costs of providing services in an unplanned pattern would have eventually overwhelmed fiscal capacity.

We had no strategy to encourage contiguous development, we had not made adequate provision for higher densities to promote affordable housing, and our standards for new development were often inadequate.

While we had initiated a capital improvement program, the GMA taught us how to develop a capital facilities plan for coming to grips with future facilities needs within our ability to pay.

Growing gracefully and affordably while preserving its small town character and historic buildings is a sizable challenge for Port Townsend and its National Historic District.



Developers had reason to complain about unclear requirements and many regulatory surprises due to incomplete standards. With a push from the GMA, these issues have been positively addressed.

As Paul Hess of Hess Construction said, "The new comprehensive plan has really increased our predictability. With the new codes, we builders now know what is required of us and that we can count on that throughout the permit process."

Community dialogue leading to a community vision

Thanks to the GMA, Port Townsend knows the future that we are setting out to achieve. What's more, we have a high degree of community consensus about that future. We have a group of basic building block ideas for our plan that define the community we want to be, and which provide a clear road map for us to follow in updating our land development process.

Progress with our neighbor

Our work under the GMA is not over. Our major neighboring jurisdiction is Jefferson County, which is just now adopting its GMA plan. The county has not yet completed work to designate a future urban growth area for the city. We may need to modify our plan depending upon the area to be included in the future urban growth area. At the heart of the GMA is the concept of orderly growth and the relationship of urban to rural areas. For the future quality of life on our peninsula, resolving the questions of how much development and what kind of development will occur in the city and county is a major issue. Without the GMA, this key question about our future might not be on the way to resolution.

Hearing board upholds the plan

We have an unusual situation in Port Townsend. The boundaries of our city were established during the last century in an overly optimistic time of land speculation.



One consequence is that our existing city boundaries are far larger than our current capacity to extend urban services.

In order to make efficient use of our financial resources, our GMA plan developed a concept for "tiering" of urban services within the city. Areas that are remote from water and sewer lines (Tier 3 areas) are required to pay the full cost of providing new infrastructure. Development in infill areas (Tier 1) is encouraged through a higher level of municipal cost sharing for needed services.

This tiering concept and other policies of our plan were challenged before the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board.

Our experience with the hearings board proved very positive, and showed that the board gives a lot of consideration to the judgment and needs of local areas. The board upheld our plan, noting that the tiering method "not only complies with the act but goes well beyond compliance to achieve one of the fundamental purposes of the act; to maximize efficient use of dollars."

Obviously, we agree. The GMA is an important tool for making wise fiscal choices.

Affordable housing may be found in Port Townsend's National Historic District. The new comprehensive plan provides for higher densities, accessory dwelling units, and other strategies.

Your GMA plan: **Taking the next step**

Are you ready to take the next step with your GMA plan? Seven years after enactment, the Growth Management Act continues to evolve.

A workshop on where we are and where we're going with the GMA is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. May 14 at the Holiday Inn in Issaquah.

The training will cover the basics, such as amending your comprehensive plan and capital facilities planning, as well as techniques for implementing and monitoring your plan.

Implementation issues include how to:

- **Transition urban growth areas from rural to urban.**
- **Identify and monitor the availability of buildable and industrial lands.**
- **Work with special purpose districts to assure consistency of their plans with your GMA plans.**

For registration information, please call AWC at 360-753-4137

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Citizens lead effort in Douglas County

By Jay Weber
Douglas County Commissioner

Ninety-five percent of the area in Douglas County is outside urban growth areas, making it easy to understand why a considerable amount of time was spent on rural and agricultural issues during the growth management planning process.

From 5-acre cherry orchards to 4,000-acre dryland wheat and cattle ranches, Douglas County has a diverse range of rural agricultural activities. Labeling this large land mass, about 1,840 square miles, was a monumental task. It took the citizens of the county about five years to accomplish it.

Trying to deal with "rural," as defined in the Growth Management Act, as being something separate and apart from "agriculture" was the first task. Where the act describes rural as "left overs" after urban areas and agriculture, forest, and mineral resource lands are designated, Webster's Dictionary describes rural as "of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture."

In Douglas County, most people recognize the broader definition: Rural is everything outside of the urban areas. It is primarily agricultural land of some kind. It deserves the same amount of deliberative attention and careful planning as urban land.

Douglas County has taken a unique approach by designating most of the non-urban land as agricultural resource. At the same time, the county has promoted the concept that "rural/agriculture" does not mean "void" or "desolate." A mix of traditional land uses in the non-urban areas has existed for many years, without many conflicts to date.

Douglas County's goal is to recognize and support the continuation of this historical land use pattern while still addressing the modern potential for conflicts among the different uses.

The county is approaching this goal in three ways:

- **Make it economically feasible for farmers to keep farming by:**
1) promoting participation in the current use tax program; 2) easing the restrictions on in-home businesses and agricultural support services; and 3) allowing farm families limited opportunities to use non-productive lands surrounding the homestead site for additional family homes.
- **Preserve and enhance the historical settlements and towns.** They provide affordable housing and agricultural support services and essential staples for the surrounding rural agricultural community.
- **Promote new land management techniques that preserve large tracts of land for agricultural uses by restricting large lot subdivisions (5 to 20 acre tracts) which are highly land consumptive.** Instead, the county promotes clustering lots for residential uses that require rural service levels and maintain an average density that is rural agriculture in nature.

Douglas County's initial planning process in the non-urban areas created a positive outcome for many people who oppose the concept of growth management and private property regulation. It also raised as many questions as it attempted to answer, leaving plenty of room to revisit and refine the first round of solutions for Douglas County's rural lands.

Wenatchee enjoying benefits of GMA

By Earl Tilly

Mayor, City of Wenatchee

The city of Wenatchee is now in the position to enjoy the many benefits that have resulted from years of effort and expense in achieving compliance with the Growth Management Act. Our experience to date has been sufficiently positive, that even if the state mandate was lifted, we would continue to follow the growth management blueprint voluntarily.

We believe the basic planning framework is sound and necessary, if we are to responsibly contend with the growth pressure we've been experiencing. With ever increasing demands on limited resources, a truly comprehensive plan for growth may well prove to be the deciding factor between success and failure.

The city of Wenatchee has been in compliance with the GMA, including development regulations for the past 30 months. Over the past two-and-a-half years, the benefits of Washington's growth management system have become apparent.

The areas of greatest improvement include:

- **Less contentious and more certain land use decisions.** The quality of our comprehensive plan and the limitations on amendments eliminates a lot of the demand for the city commission's time on land use issues.
- **Greater understanding of citizens' desires for the future of their community.** GMA's public participation requirements allow significant citizen involvement in establishing priorities and in providing policy recommendations that reflect their values and aspirations for the future of the city.
- **Improved capital budgeting.** Six-year capital facilities budgets

and 20-year land use projections help lengthen our perspective beyond our one-year budget cycle. We are now making informed long-term financial decisions that we have a high level of confidence in.

- **Knowledge about the community.** GMA's requirement to inventory and analyze our facilities and services provides us with an interactive data base. We now have instant access to critical capacity information that allows us to make more informed decisions in less time.

- **Heightened regional cooperation.** The required coordination with other jurisdictions in the region results in a more collaborative regional problem solving process. Enhanced interaction between professional staff members also is beneficial.
- **Improved coordination between long-range plans and development regulations.** The GMA's consistency requirements for comprehensive plans and development regulations ensures that our preferred vision of the future will become a reality.

Using the Growth Management Act

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

Each year there are those who want to weaken the GMA, those who believe that more growth is good for the economy, regardless of what it does to our quality of life. And, each time they erode the basic principles of the act, we lose ground—literally.

The efforts made so far by state agencies and local governments have been good. But they're just the beginning of what is needed. The

Department of Natural Resources, which I administer, is proud to be part of the changes.

And we've really appreciated the efforts of all those other folks who insist on the protection of our vast heritage of resources. With your continued help, we'll pass that heritage on in good condition to future generations of Washingtonians.

Six facts about how GMA counties are using their forested lands

Did you know:

... that 80 acres is the most-often used minimum lot size for forest land of long-term commercial significance?

What this means: Counties are doing a good job retaining large lots and assuring low residential density in commercial forest lands.

... that one house on 5 to 10 acres is the most often used minimum density of land adjacent to forest lands?

What this means: High density residential development is less likely to creep up against commercial forests.

... that 94 percent of counties allow residential development in forest lands?

What this means: Most GMA counties need to take action to be sure that new residents do not create land use conflicts that undermine forest management.

... that 61 percent of counties do not require residential developments to provide wildfire protection and prevention?

What this means: Counties could improve efforts to prevent and protect residents from wildfire.

... that 44 percent of counties require at least a 100-foot setback for lands adjacent to commercial forests?

What this means: Some counties are doing a good job of maintaining buffers that help protect commercial forests.

... that 76 percent of counties allow mineral extraction as a permitted, conditional, or special use on forest lands in addition to forest operations?

What this means: Many counties are realizing forest lands have more to offer than timber.

Source: Department of Natural Resources

World Wide Web comes to CTED

If you like to surf the Internet, you may want to check out the home page of the state's Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. There you can access "Growth Management Services."

Documents currently "on line" include: a report on GMA compliance; minimum guidelines for classifying natural resource lands and critical areas; procedural criteria for comprehensive plans and development regulations; the Growth Management Program's six-year vision and strategy; and "Growth Management: It's Beginning To Take Shape."

Here is the Web site address for this information:

<http://www.wa.gov/cted/growth/>

League announces growth management awards program

The League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund is sponsoring a state-wide Growth Management Awards Program.

"Since its inception in 1990, growth management has received more attention for its controversy than for its content," said Alice Stolz, president of the state League. "Throughout the state, thousands of citizens from all sectors of their communities have been working with their local governments to develop effective tools for managing growth. And they are succeeding." The League is impressed with the collaboration, consensus, and just plain hard work that characterize local efforts to manage growth, Stolz said. In the months ahead, the League will seek out and recognize the best of these efforts.

The League's Education Fund is dedicated to citizen education on public policy issues. By presenting awards and publicizing the stories of the award winners, the League hopes to provide a more complete and balanced picture of how communities are managing growth throughout Washington state.

Anyone may submit a nomination. The League hopes to receive nominations from individual citizens, businesses, and private organizations as well as from government agencies and jurisdictions, Stolz said.



League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund

The League seeks nominations for outstanding efforts to manage growth in the following categories:

- ☐ Plans
- ☐ Projects
- ☐ Programs to involve or inform the public, and
- ☐ People

Nominations may be submitted until July 15, 1997. Winners will be announced in mid-September. Nomination forms are available from the League of Women Voters of Washington, 1411 Fourth Avenue Building, Suite 803, Seattle, WA 98101. Forms can also be requested from the League by calling 206-622-8961 or by sending a fax to 206-622-4908.



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